

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----021933 051547Z /50

O R 051459Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8560  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3736

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, LE  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN PROTEST AGAINST DEPARTMENT'S JULY 2 STATEMENT

1. REGRET THAT SYRIANS HAVE BEEN SO UPSET BY OUR DEMARCHE  
AND STATEMENT ON FIGHTING IN BEIRUT AND SUSPECT THAT IN REACTION  
THEY HAVE TOLD LEBANESE TO STAY AWAY FROM US OR THEY ARE  
GOING TO PULL OUT. THAT IS ONLY EXPLANATION I HAVE FOR FACT  
THERE HAS BEEN NO ATTEMPT BY BOUTROS OR SARKIS TO GET IN  
TOUCH WITH US FOR PAST 48 HOURS.

2. THERE SEEM TO ME TO BE TWO POINTS AT ISSUE. FIRST IS  
SYRIAN IRRITATION THAT LEBANESE WOULD ASK US TO WEIGH IN  
WITH THEM. PART OF CONFUSION IS DUE TO FACT THAT  
OUR 3668 WAS NOT AS COMPLETE AS IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, HAVING  
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BEEN COMPOSED OVER AN ERRATIC SECURE VOICE RADIO LINK UNDER  
DIFFICULT CONDITIONS, AND SUBSEQUENTLY AMENDED IN LIGHT  
LATER DEVELOPMENTS. FOR THE RECORD, HERE IS MY RECOLLECTION  
OF SEQUENCE. DURING MY CONVERSATION WITH SARKIS ON JULY 1,  
WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT WE COULD DO, HE FIRST SAID, "TALK  
TO THE ISRAELIS AND THE SYRIANS AND THE PEOPLE HERE,"  
MEANING THE PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNISTS. HE NOTED THAT CHAMOUN

AND PIERRE GEMAYEL WERE STILL INTERESTED IN CONCILIATION WITH SYRIANS, BUT BASHIR GEMAYEL AND THE PHALANGE WAR COUNCIL WERE THE PROBLEM. HE THOUGHT FOR MINUTE AND THEN SAID, "NO, I'LL TALK TO SYRIANS. YOU TALK TO ISRAELIS." ON RETURN TO RESIDENCE, I CALLED FORMIN BOUTROS TO TELL HIM OF CONVERSATION, WHICH WAS NEWS TO HIM. HE WAS VERY GLOOMY ABOUT POSSIBILITY DOING ANYTHING WITH ANYBODY. HE CALLED BACK FEW MINUTES LATER TO SAY HE HAD TALKED TO PRESIDENT AND WANTED MAKE IT CLEAR WE WERE NOT TO SPEAK TO SYRIANS ON BEHALF GOL. IF WE WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING ON OUR OWN, THAT WAS OUR AFFAIR, BUT IT SHOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE MADE AT REQUEST SARKIS. UNFORTUNATELY, WE DID NOT MAKE THIS EXPLICIT IN OUTGOING TELEGRAM, AND SYRIANS JUMPED TO CONCLUSION THAT SINCE WE WERE MAKING DEMARCHE AFTER I HAD TALKED TO SARKIS, IT MUST HAVE BEEN AT REQUEST OF LATTER.

3. SECOND POINT IS NATURE AND SEVERITY OF BOMBARDMENT NIGHT OF JULY 1. SUSPECT NO ONE IN DAMASCUS, INCLUDING ASSAD AND KHADDAM, HAVE ANY IDEA JUST HOW BAD IT WAS, OR NOW INDISCRIMINATE. SYRIANS WERE APPLYING DOCTRINE OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY, AND DOING SO WITH A FEROCITY THAT MADE US CONCLUDE (A) SARKIS CERTAINLY HAD NO CONTROL OVER THEM, (B) THEY WERE EMBARKED ON SOMETHING CONSIDERABLY BROADER THAN A SIMPLE POLICE ACTION. (THE ORIGINS OF THE FIGHTING ON THAT DAY ARE STILL OBSCURE, SARKIS TOLD ME CHAMOUNISTS AS WELL AS PHALANGE PUT THE BLAME ON CONFIDENTIAL

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ELIAS HANNUSH, AN UNRULY NLP MILITIA LEADER WHO IS NOT REALLY UNDER CHAMOUN'S CONTROL. THE CHAMOUNIST VERSION, HOWEVER, WAS THAT A GROUP OF MEN FROM SHIYAH HAD COME OVER TO AIN RUMMANEH AND TRIED TO KIDNAP THREE SPECTATORS AT A FOOTBALL MATCH. TWO OF THE KIDNAPPEES HAD GOTTEN AWAY BUT THE RAIDERS HAD MADE OFF WITH THE THIRD. IN THE ENSUING MELEE, THE SYRIANS WERE HIT ACCIDENTALLY. (ACCORDING TO DANY CHAMOUN THE SHOTS WERE ACTUALLY FIRED FROM SHIYAH TO COVER THE KIDNAPPERS, BUT THAT SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESERVE.)

4. I DO NOT KNOW THE TIMING OF THIS ALLEGED INCIDENT, BUT THE SYRIANS OPENED UP WITH ARTILLERY WITH VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF PRELIMINARIES AT 1605. SUCH BATTLES NORMALLY START, IN OUR LIMITED EXPERIENCE, WITH EXCHANGES OF SMALL ARMS FIRE, OFTEN GOING ON FOR HOURS, BEFORE ARTILLERY OR ROCKETS ARE BROUGHT INTO PLAY, AT 1530 RPT 1530, AT LEAST ONE MAN IN ASHRAFIYAH WAS WOUNDED BY A CARLOAD OF "SYRIANS" FIRING SUBMACHINE GUNS INDISCRIMINATELY AT PEOPLE ON THE STREET. THAT IS THE ONLY OTHER PRELIMINARY I AM AWARE OF.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 3736

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5. BOTH THE CHAMOUNS AND GEMAYELS CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN GUINELY UNPREPARED AND SURPRISED THAT ANYTHING WOULD HAPPEN THAT AFTERNOON IN BEIRUT. I DO NOT HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR THEIR VERACITY, BUT THE PACE OF EVENTS AND CURRENT DEMANDS ALLEGEDLY BEING MADE BY THE SYRIANS, AS WELL AS THEIR OBVIOUS EXPECTATION OF TROUBLE BEFORE THE FIGHTING BROKE OUT MAKES ME WONDER IF THE SYRIANS DID NOT SEEK TO PROVOKE AN INCIDENT TO JUSTIFY A POWER MOVE AGAINST THE PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNISTS.

6. BEING UNABLE TO DISCUSS THIS WITH MY COLLEAGUES DOWNTOWN, OR WITH ANYONE ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER, MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR ME TO ASCERTAIN HOW SOUND SUCH SPECULATION IS, BUT I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE SYRIANS ARE MERELY DEFENDING THEMSELVES, AS THEY HAVE CLAIMED IN WASHINGTON AND DAMASCUS. THEY GIVE THE IMPRESSION THEY ARE MOVING IN TO  
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TAKE DECISIVE ACTIONS WHICH SARKIS HAS SO FAR BEEN UNABLE AND

UNWILLING TO TAKE. THIS ROAD IS FRAUGHT WITH PERIL.

7. I DON'T KNOW HOW GENUINE THE SYRIAN IRRITATION WITH US IS, BUT DO NOT REALLY SEE HOW THEY CAN TAKE EXCEPTION TO OUR STATEMENT, WHICH PUT THE BLAME ON NOBODY AND MERELY CALLED FOR A CEASE-FIRE. THEIR OVER-REACTION TO THAT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE SOMEONE CAUGHT WITH HIS HAND IN THE COOKIE JAR. THEY DO NOT WANT US INTERFERING WITH THEIR GRAND STRATEGY FOR LEBANON, BECAUSE THEY ARE AFRAID WE WILL SUPPORT THE CHRISTIANS AGAINST THEM. PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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